OUT OF FOCUS

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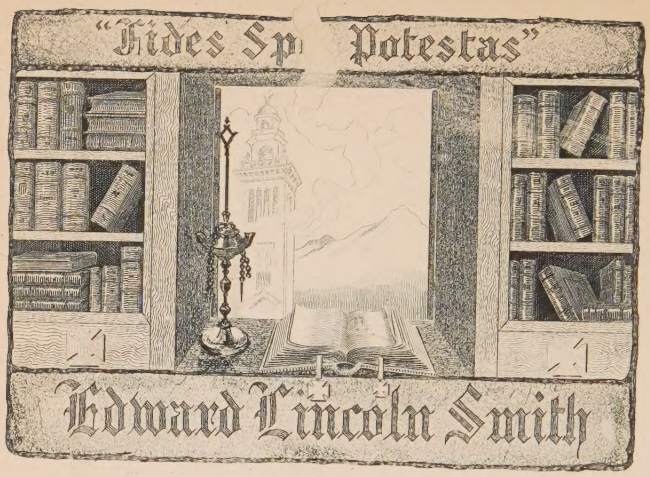

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SHORT TALKS TO BOYS AND GIRLS

BY

C. N. BUTTON, Ph.D.

(LATE OF CANDLISH CHURCH, EDINBURGH)

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To
D. M. B.

FOREWORD

Most of these short talks, which are based upon things seen and heard in various parts of the world, have been given to boys and girls in Edinburgh, and at the suggestion of some of my congregation there I have put them into book form, in the hope that they may be of further use. Delivered as they were, over a period of three years, without any idea of publication, the addresses show no one underlying idea, unless perhaps it be that on the whole they keep in view the world into which the boys and girls of to-day are growing up, the world which is drawing so close together that those who would live in it must learn a right kind of Imperialism, a right kind of Internationalism, and above all the supremacy of the Kingship of Christ.

The last four talks, which were given as one, in a complete Children's Service, have been

included, because I am convinced that there is more need than ever to-day for church-going children to be taught a little more clearly what is the meaning of the different parts of the service and what is required of them as church-goers.

C. N. BUTTON.

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I

OUT OF FOCUS

THE photograph went all wrong, but for once it wasn't my fault. Anybody who looked at it could have told you what was wrong in a moment. It was out of focus. That's just a camera-man's way of saying that things were out of their proper place. The people weren't in the right place. The camera wasn't in the right place. The light wasn't in the right place. The result was that the picture wasn't a picture at all—only a horrible blur.

It all happened in the city of Colombo, in the south of Ceylon, where the rice and the tea come from. My rickshaw boy (he was really a man, but they call them all ' boys ' in Colombo till they're about sixty) was pulling me all round the city, stopping every few minutes so that I might take photographs. Suddenly he stopped by the side of a large pool, where there were forty or fifty black

boys and men bathing. As soon as they saw us they came running up out of the water, dripping wet, and began to gather round me so as to get into the picture. They screamed, and made signs, and jostled one another in their eagerness. It seemed as though every one of those boys and men had made up his mind that whoever else wasn't going to be in the front of the picture, he was.

As they wouldn't stop screaming and pushing, there was nothing for me to do but to take my chance of getting a photograph as they were. Click! went the little catch in front of the camera, and the picture, undeveloped, was inside.

I forgot all about it till three weeks later, when I had the photograph developed and printed. What a jumble it was! There was a squashed-in head here, and a pushed-in face there, and things were in such a mix that it was hard to tell whose head belonged to whom, and whose face belonged to whom, and whether the thing that ought to have been an arm wasn't really the branch of a tree. Anyhow, they all looked very foolish, and not one of them knows to this day how foolish he looked, for I have never been back to Colombo

to tell them. Foolish? Just because they were 'out of focus.'

Black boys and men are not the only ones who get out of focus and look foolish and never know it. White boys and girls and white men and women do it, too. We all do it, sometimes.

When a girl is very goodlooking, and knows it (all goodlooking girls know they're goodlooking) and because she's goodlooking she begins to look down on other girls who aren't nearly so goodlooking, she is out of focus. She looks very foolish, and everybody knows it except herself. She will soon lose her beauty, so.

When a boy is very clever, and can do his work much more quickly than other boys, and because of that he gives himself airs, and struts about as though he was a person of very special importance and every other boy didn't count at all, he is out of focus. He looks very foolish, and everybody knows it except himself.

Yes, it is the easiest thing in the world for any one of us to get out of focus. It's so very easy to think so much of ourselves that we don't think nearly enough of others. But

the boy or girl who keeps close to Jesus Christ doesn't easily get out of focus. When we keep close to Him we see that there's not very much in us to boast about, and so much that is unlovely and unloveable; and He is also showing us how much better and worthier we might be. That is the only way to keep in focus—keep close to Jesus Christ.

We are always out of focus when Jesus Christ is not in the very centre of our lives. Sooner or later the whole picture goes wrong if He is not there.

II

TINKER, TAILOR, SOLDIER, SAILOR

It was a very nice little party, in a very nice little house, and just four very nice people—my friend, his wife, his little boy and myself—to eat a very nice dinner.

Soup.
Fish.
Chicken.
Cherry Pie.

We must put the cherry pie in extra big letters, because for the little boy it was the most important thing of all. He took just as long as the rest of us to get through the soup and the fish and the chicken ; but when it came to the cherry pie he beat us easily. He was ready for a second helping before we were half-way through our first.

During the long wait, the boy amused himself by counting the cherry stones. As I watched him out of the corner of my eye I

saw him pushing the stones, one by one, round the edge of his plate with his fork, and I heard him whisper something as he moved each stone on—

Tinker—tailor—soldier—sailor
Rich man—poor man—beggarman—thief.

Over and over again he said it.

You know quite well what it was all about. He was asking himself what he was going to be when he grew up. Would he be a tinker, or a tailor, or a soldier, or a sailor, or a rich man, or a poor man, or a beggarman, or a thief?

That is a very important question that all boys and girls ought to ask themselves every now and again. 'What am I going to be when I grow up? A tram-conductor, or a minister? Shall I run an ice-cream cart or a draper's shop? Shall I be a doctor or a sea-captain?'

An old gentleman once came upon a lot of boys playing a game together. He watched them for a long time, and as soon as the game was over he gathered them round him and he asked them one by one the question: 'What are you going to be when you grow up?' Every boy gave a different answer. One was

going to be a soldier. Another was going to be a doctor. Another was going to keep a sweet-shop, and so on. At last it came to the turn of the smallest boy to give his answer. He badly wanted to be something different from the rest, but he simply couldn't think of anything fresh. Suddenly he had an idea. When the old gentleman put the question to him he drew himself up proudly, and said, 'Please, sir, I'm going to be a man!'

Of course, all the other boys laughed, but that little boy won the prize for the best answer.

'Please, sir, I'm going to be a man!' Could any of us wish to be anything better than that? A man? That's the best thing on earth that any one can be—unless, of course, it is to be a woman; but we haven't any choice about that.

Every boy who's worth anything at all has made up his mind about that before he's eight years of age—he's going to be a man. Yes, but what sort of a man?

A rich man? Some of you may be that.

A clever man? Some of you may be that.

A goodlooking man? Some of you may be that.

But supposing you are a rich man and a clever man and a goodlooking man, all rolled into one, that isn't big enough for you. God meant you to be something bigger than all these things put together. He meant you to be a *good* man—a man who stands up for everything that's noble and true and fine and clean.

And what is a good man, after all? Well, that's just another way of saying *a God's man*, for all good men are God's men.

A Man—a Good Man—and A God's Man.

Every girl who's worth anything at all has made up her mind by the time she's eight years of age that she's going to be a woman. Yes, but what sort of a woman?

A rich woman? Some of you may be that.

A clever woman? Some of you may be that.

A goodlooking woman? Some of you may be that.

But supposing you are a rich woman and a clever woman and a goodlooking woman, all rolled into one, that isn't big enough for you. God meant you to be something bigger than all these things put together. He meant you

to be a *good* woman,—a woman who lives for everything that's noble and true and fine and clean.

And what is a good woman, after all? Well, that's just another way of saying *a God's woman,* for all good women are God's women.

A Woman—A Good Woman—and A God's Woman.

That is the kind of man and woman the world needs to-day more than it needs any other kind.

More than rich men and women, more than clever men and women, more than good-looking men and women, the world needs good men and women, that is to say, God's men and God's women.

III

THE MOTOR-CAR THAT WOULDN'T GO

It was only a tiny little car, meant to carry two people, but for several weeks it had been doing far more than it was ever meant to do. Three people had been squeezed into it, and with a lot of luggage strapped all round the sides of the car they had been travelling all over the beautiful island of Tasmania. Up hill and down dale they had been, over rough mountainous roads, and roads that were hardly roads at all. But the little car had stood up to it all so bravely that they had begun to think it would go on for ever. Suddenly, when they were just half way up a big hill, it stopped.

The three people got out of the car to find out what was wrong, but nobody could find out. One thought it was this thing, and another thought it was that thing, and another thought it was something else, but all they

could be sure of was that the car wouldn't go. At last they all got behind the car and pushed it up to the top of the hill. Then they got in, and the car ran smoothly down the other side, but as soon as it reached the level ground at the bottom, it stopped again. Once again they got out, and tried all sorts of things to make it go—but still it wouldn't go.

What was the trouble? They had tried everything, and at last they were beginning to get quite bad-tempered over it. Then someone said it might perhaps be a good thing to give the car some oil. So one of the men took out a tin of thick oil and poured a pint and a half of it into the engine. When he had done that, another man gave the handle a few turns—and away she went!

The only thing it needed to make it go was a little grease; and that was the last thing they thought of.

The engine of that little car was made up of ever so many different parts. Some of the parts work one way, some another, and some of them are always rubbing together; but when the different parts rub together very much they are likely to wear each other out; and so, to stop the parts from wearing each

other away until the engine won't work, grease has to be poured in every now and again, and so long as there is plenty of grease all the parts run together smoothly, and the engine works well.

Sometimes this great world in which we live seems like a big engine made up of ever so many different parts, and everything depends on the different parts working together well. There is the white man and the black man and the yellow man. There is the rich man and the poor man. There is the man who works with his hands and the man who works with his head. There are the people of this religion and of that religion and the other religion. These are all the different parts of that big machine which we call the world. Sometimes the parts rub together so much that they wear each other out, and the machine begins to go very badly. Then we have wars and strikes and riots. When things go wrong, people say we ought to try this and that and the other thing and perhaps the machine would go better. The last thing that many of them think of is that what the machine needs most of all is a little grease. Without the grease it will never work well.

But what is the grease for this great world-machine? Did you ever think of that little word 'grace' and what it means? And did you ever think how much the word 'grace' is like the word 'grease'? It is so much like it that the people in Ireland actually call it 'grease.'

'Grace' in the great world-machine is like 'grease' in the motor-car. The engine simply will not go without it. When it is going badly you may try everything you can think of to make it go better, but if there is no grease it won't work.

And what is this grease or grace? It is just simply lovingkindness and courtesy and thoughtfulness and consideration for others. That is the grease that makes the world go—'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

Let us remember to take it wherever we go in the world.

IV

MIZ

'Miz' was not his real name, but we all called him 'Miz' for short, because he had a long Japanese name which was far too hard for any of us to say. Poor Miz was having rather a bad time. He lived in a great college in the city of New York, where there were Indians and Chinamen and Swiss and Germans and Japanese and Turks and many more; but although we spoke ever so many different languages, we managed to get on pretty well, because most could speak a little English. But Miz knew only a very few words of English, and so he was left very much out in the cold.

But though Miz couldn't speak to any one he kept on smiling. He was smiling all the time, so much so that everybody liked him. For my part I felt that I would like to get to know him somehow, but how was I to begin?

One morning Miz came down to breakfast, smiling as usual, and I gave him an extra pleasant smile in return. He seemed very pleased, for he smiled once again, and bowed very low. The next morning we smiled at one another, and bowed again. We did this every morning for about a week, but that was as far as we got. Then one morning I put out my hand to shake hands, and for just about another week we shook hands every morning. But still we weren't getting on quite fast enough, so one morning instead of shaking hands I gave him a good pinch before he had time to know what was happening. The following morning he got in first, and pinched me—a good deal harder than I had pinched him. So for a few mornings after that we pinched each other every day, and had quite a lot of fun trying to get in the first pinch. After a few weeks, Miz had learned enough English for us to be able to talk a little together. But just as we had begun to understand one another a little we had to part—Miz to go to Japan, and I to go to Scotland.

One day I received a letter in Scotland, bearing a Japanese stamp. It was from Miz.

He asked me to go and stay with him in Japan, but 'if you cannot come,' he said, 'we shall meet some day with a great something in our hearts.'

So, though he couldn't speak my language, and I couldn't speak his, we came to be good friends. We got to know one another because we spoke the language that every one can understand—the language of love. He knew that I loved his Master, and I knew that he loved mine. We both loved the same Master. 'We shall meet some day with a great something in our hearts.'

There is nothing like the language of love for helping people to understand one another. That was the language that David Livingstone spoke to the natives when he first went to Africa. He couldn't speak their language, but they understood the language of love. The language of love will get you through anywhere. It was the language that God Himself used when He wanted to make men and women understand Him better—He spoke in 'The Word made flesh,' and then men began to understand as they never did before.

V

ESPERANTO

Just on the border between Russia and Poland there is a little town which must be one of the queerest little towns in the world. It is called Bialystok. Though it is only a little town, ever so many different languages are spoken in it, or used to be, anyhow. In one part of it everybody spoke Polish, in another part everybody spoke Russian, in another part everybody spoke German. In another part everybody spoke a strange mixture of languages called Yiddish, the language of the Jews. Many of these people refused to learn each other's language, and they were stupid enough to think that because they didn't know what other people were saying they ought to hate them, just because they didn't understand them. So there were constant quarrels, and people were always being killed in this little town just because they couldn't understand one another.

Just about fifty years ago, a little Polish boy, a Jew by the name of Zamenhof, went to live in this little town. His heart grew very heavy as he saw how much the people hated one another, and how they were always quarrelling. He saw that one of the great reasons why they hated one another was that they were unwilling or unable or too lazy or too proud to learn one another's language; and he saw also that these differences of language made a wall of thought between these peoples just as real as any wall built of stone, and that the only way to help them to agree was to get them to speak the same language. But how was that to be done? There was the rub. They wouldn't all learn Russian, or Polish, or German, or Yiddish. Could they not all learn Latin? He thought of that, but he knew how difficult Latin was, and so he was quite sure they would never all learn that. Well, he thought it all over, and he made up his mind that the only way to get over the difficulty was for someone to invent a new language that would be easy enough for them all to learn. And he would set about inventing that language himself. So he got together the grammar-books and

dictionaries of many different languages, and he worked away at them for months, until he was well on the way with his new language. He soon began to teach it to his school-fellows, and of course, everybody laughed at him and said he was mad. But he kept on in spite of their sneers, and after a few years had gone by he had made his language almost perfect by continually studying it and improving it. When he came to give it a name he called it Esperanto, which means 'The language of hope.'

To-day, Esperanto is spoken by hundreds of thousands of people all over the world. It has grown and grown in favour until there is hardly a country anywhere to be found where someone does not speak it.

Just a little while ago, about a thousand people came from different parts of the world to Edinburgh, to talk together about Esperanto. They were to be seen walking about the streets wearing a little green star, 'the star of hope,' as a badge to show that they spoke Esperanto. Many of the tram-car conductors and policemen of the city were also wearing the green star, to show that they had been learning Esperanto so as to help

these people when they came. And so, from this very small beginning, the use of the language has grown and grown until it is the language of hope for the whole world. It was all through the bright idea and the good, solid work of a little boy in Poland, who dreamed a dream of goodwill and set himself to work to realize it.

Perhaps some of you learn Esperanto. Others of you will learn it some day. But whether we learn Esperanto or not, we can all learn to speak the language of hope, the real language of hope, which the man who has love in his heart is speaking all the time. It is the language of Jesus Christ. Let us speak it every time we meet somebody who belongs to a different nation or a different church or a different class from our own. It will help to break down some of the walls that separate men from one another, and it will be helping the world forward to a day of goodwill. When Jesus came into this world He found high walls everywhere separating people from one another. There was a wall which separated the Roman from the Greek. There was a wall which separated the Jew from the Gentile in the Temple. There was a wall which

separated slave people from free people. Worse walls, thicker walls, higher walls, than any walls that separate men and women from one another to-day. But in one place St. Paul says of Jesus that He was a great breaker-down of walls, 'He hath broken down the middle wall of partition,' which reads in one translation 'He hath broken down the barriers.' That's what Jesus was always doing, breaking down barriers, and every true follower of His is doing it too, all the time.

VI

THE GREAT FOOTBALL MATCH

When I arrived in Princes Street, Edinburgh, one fine Saturday morning I found that I was the only person on the street who was not wearing a favour. I had quite forgotten that it was the day of the great football match between Scotland and England. Some of them were wearing a thistle, and some were wearing a rose. If you saw a man wearing a thistle you knew that he wanted Scotland to win. If you saw a man wearing a rose you knew he wanted England to win. But as I walked along I saw one man who was wearing *both a thistle and a rose.* What on earth did he want ?

Perhaps he just wanted to be funny.

Perhaps he had a Scots father and an English mother, and couldn't make up his mind which he wanted to win.

Perhaps he wanted both sides to win.

Perhaps he was an American or a Canadian, or a Welshman or an Irishman, and didn't care very much either way, so long as the better side won.

Anyway, it didn't matter so very much after all. It was only a game, though it was a great game, and the game will soon be forgotten.

But there is a great struggle going on every hour and every week and every year. It never stops, and it goes on everywhere—in your school, in your home, all the world over, —and we are all taking part in it, *on one side or the other*. It is the struggle between right and wrong, between good and evil, between everything that is beautiful and lovely, and everything that is ugly and bad. Which side are you and I on in that struggle? We are bound to be on one side or the other. We can't be on both sides like that man with his rose and his thistle. Some people try to be. If they think right is going to win, they are for right. If they think wrong is going to win, they are for wrong. Sometimes they are on both sides—they can never make up their minds. Jesus told us we couldn't be like that—not that we mustn't, but that we

couldn't. 'He that is not with Me is against Me, and he that is not against Me is with Me.' Think of that—we are either on God's side, or we are against Him. We can't be both. Which side are you on?

When the great Civil War was raging in America, and Abraham Lincoln was fighting to free the slaves, someone came to him and said that he hoped God was on Lincoln's side and they would be bound to win. 'I am not worrying about that,' said Lincoln. 'What I am concerned about is that *we* should be on *God's* side; then we shall be bound to win, even if we lose.' What did he mean, by saying, 'We shall be bound to win, *even if we lose*?' He meant that however many defeats he might get, he was bound to win in the long run, for God's side is always the side of justice and truth and liberty, and God is bound to win.

It is a grand thing to know which side you are on, and grander still to be quite sure, come what may, that you are on God's side. Then you are 'bound to win, even if you lose.'

'Lord Jesus, help me to make up my mind. If I haven't cared very much which side I'm on, help me to come over to Thy side, and to

stay there ; and never let me doubt that if I am on Thy side I shall be bound to win, even if I lose, for Thy side is always the winning side.'

VII

THE CHRISTMAS PARTY

It was Christmas Eve, and three hundred poor boys and girls from the slums of Edinburgh were enjoying themselves at a party.

The hall was brightly lit, and gaily decorated with Chinese lanterns and streamers, and everything else to make the place look warm and cheerful and Christmassy. The tables were all laden with buns and cakes and sweets and crackers, and on the platform there was a wonderful Christmas tree, with dozens of electric lights of many different colours shining through the branches, though the branches could hardly be seen for the load of presents on them.

On the stroke of seven there was a loud knock on a little door at the back of the platform. Suddenly, all the chattering ceased, and everybody looked towards the little door. Another loud knock, and the door opened. In

came Father Christmas, with his long white beard and his red coat and his kind smile. First he spoke a few nice words, telling the boys and girls how he had been travelling all over the land giving presents away, and how he had at last come to give them theirs. Then he stepped forward to the Christmas tree, and picked off a present. After reading the label on the parcel he called out, 'Is Willie MacGregor here?' There was no answer, but at the back of the hall a little boy of eight was beginning to stir. It was his first Christmas party, and he was having a wonderful time. But although his name was Willie MacGregor he did not think the present could be meant for him, because he had never received a present in his life.

'Is Willie MacGregor here?' said Father Christmas once again. Someone went across the hall and gave Willie a little nudge. 'Run up and get your present, Willie.'

Willie ran up to the platform as fast as his little legs would carry him. 'Here, Willie,' said Father Christmas, holding out a large brown-paper parcel, 'this is all for you. A happy Christmas to you.' Willie was too excited even to say 'Thank you.' Snatching

the parcel out of Father Christmas's hands, and hugging it tightly, he ran back to his place as fast as he had come.

There he sat for a few minutes, hugging the parcel, far too excited to open it. Then, turning to a lady near by, he asked, 'Is this all for me?" 'Yes,' she replied, 'it's all for you.' 'And is it all for nothing?' asked Willie. 'Yes,' she said, 'all for nothing.' For a few moments longer Willie said nothing. Then he rose from his seat, and laying his parcel in the lady's lap, he said, 'Hold this for me, please, while I go away and fetch my brother, Jimmy.'

Willie disappeared through the nearest door into the street. In ten minutes' time he was back again with his brother Jimmy, and together the two of them walked up on to the platform to get a present for Jimmy.

It had been the most wonderful day in Willie's life so far, but the most wonderful moment of the day came when he was sharing his happiness with his brother Jimmy.

VIII

A GOOD CHRISTMAS PRESENT

(December, 1925)

All my Christmas presents came early this year. That's how I like them. Once December has come, it seems an awfully long while to wait for Christmas Day, doesn't it ? Well, this year I didn't have to wait at all, for by the twentieth of December I had received all I was to get. Round about the ninth of December there came a beautiful book from Australia. On the tenth there was a box of sweets from America, and then, a few days before Christmas, the best Christmas present I ever had. It wasn't wrapped up in brown paper. There was no address on it, and there was nothing to say where it came from ; and yet as soon as I looked at it I was quite sure who had sent it to me. I say ' it,' but it wasn't really an ' it,' at all. It was a ' she,'

a little baby girl, very much alive. When I first saw her she was wrapped up in a beautiful Shetland shawl, and a lot of other things beside; but I knew at once that this was my Christmas present, sent straight from God.

She came from God, and she still belongs to God. She always will. Of course, we're going to call her ours, but she doesn't really belong to us. God has not given her to us for keeps. He has only lent her to us for a little while to train for Him, and we must try all the harder to be all that we ought to be, so that she may learn her lessons from us. Then some day God will send for us all, and take us back home to Him, with our lessons well learned. So our Father sends us all into this world, which is like a great school where we have many things to learn; then, when school days are over He will send for us and take us back home again. While we are here we are called by all kinds of different names—Johnny Smith and Mary Jones and Willie Brown, and so on—but those are not our real names after all. God has put His own name on every one of us. We are His children, and we have to live as His children.

IX

A VISIT FROM A POLICEMAN

The snow lay thick on the ground, so thick that nobody could be heard walking along the street ; and though there were plenty of carts and cars continually passing by, you would never have known it unless you had looked out of the window and seen them for yourself. Suddenly the silence was disturbed by a loud ' rat-tat ' on the front-door of the manse.

The minister was just finishing breakfast, and was thinking about going into the study to begin his day's work, when the maid came in, looking rather worried. ' There's a policeman to see you, sir,' she said. ' Shall I ask him up into the study ? '

' Yes,' said the minister, ' you'd better ask him up. If you don't he might come up without being asked.'

A moment later the minister went up into the study, and there was the policeman

waiting for him. The policeman stood up and began to feel in his pockets for something. Was it hand-cuffs he was feeling for, and was he going to take the minister off straight away? Or was it a blue paper to say that the minister had to appear in the Police Court for something he had done? No, it wasn't hand-cuffs, and it wasn't a blue paper. It was a white paper, headed up like this:

'BURGH OF EDINBURGH
REMOVAL OF SNOW
FROM FOOTPATHS.
POLICE NOTICE.'

When the minister took the paper he found that there was a law in the City of Edinburgh that every one must have the snow removed from the front of his house each morning before ten o'clock. The policeman had come to tell him about that. There was the snow of several days lying thick on the ground in front of the manse. It was then nine o'clock, so he had just an hour to sweep it all away.

As soon as the policeman was gone, he took off his coat and got to work on the snow. As he worked away he saw a great motor-lorry go by, then several more, all piled up high

with snow, and he began to think what a tremendous job it was keeping the streets of a big city clean. Then he went on to think of days hundreds of years ago, when there were no motor-lorries to cart away the snow and the dirt, and it all had to be carted away by horse or mule ; and somehow there came into his mind an old saying that people had in Jerusalem in the time of our Lord. It ran like this : ' The streets of Jerusalem are kept clean when every man cleans the dirt away from his own door.' In those days the dogs used to clean up a good deal of the dirt, and the worst of it used to be carted out to big pits, which were kept burning all day and all night ; but the only way to keep the city really clean was for each man to take a hand in it, and clear away the dirt from his own door. That was how this old saying arose : ' The streets of Jerusalem are kept clean when every man cleans the dirt away from his own door.'

That is really the way they keep Edinburgh clean from snow ; and when you come to think of it that is how every city is kept clean.

The day after the policeman called, it

snowed only just a very little, so the minister thought it was hardly worth while cleaning the snow away. But the man next door cleaned his snow away, and when the minister saw how neat and tidy his neighbour's part of the street was compared with his own, he felt so ashamed of himself that he went and cleaned the snow in front of his own door. So when the next-door neighbour did his part he was helping the minister to do his. When one man minded his business it was easier for another to mind his business ; and so, though nobody in the street said a word about it to anybody else, they were all helping each other to keep the whole place tidy when every one attended to his own business.

So it is in the great world at large. We all have to help to keep the world a little cleaner every day. All the men and women and boys and girls who live straight and true and cleanly and kindly help others to do the same, and all together help to keep the world a much cleaner and better place than it would otherwise be. Are you doing your bit to keep the world clean ?

X

THE BOY WHO WANTED TO GROW UP

It was long past his bedtime, but he didn't want to go to bed a bit, especially as there were friends to supper. He pleaded and pleaded to be allowed to stay, but father and mother wouldn't hear of it. Off to bed he must go. At last, a very sad little boy might have been seen going out of the door, and muttering something as he went. 'I'll be quick and grow up,' he said, 'and then I'll be able to do as I like.'

Boys and girls are often in a hurry to grow up. It seems to them that the grown-up folk have all the fun. There's no one to come to them just when they're enjoying themselves, and say 'Now, Johnny, it's time you went to bed.' No one looks at them across the tea-table and says, 'Willie, you're not to have any more of those cakes to-day.' No one ever tells them that it's time they got

their face washed. And so they often wish they were grown up. And yet, while most boys and girls are in a hurry to become men and women, most men and women sometimes wish they were boys and girls again. Strange, isn't it ?

There is a story, hundreds of years old, about a little boy named Theseus, who, like many of you, was in a hurry to grow up. He was prince of Athens, and he used to live with his mother at the foot of a great mountain. Every day they went and played together in a place where there was a big rock, and sometimes, when the boy was tired of playing, his mother would tell him wonderful stories about his father, the King of Athens, who lived far away ; and every time the boy heard these stories about the wonderful things his father was doing, he begged his mother to let him go to Athens too. 'Not yet, Theseus,' she would answer, 'you're not big enough yet ; but when you're big enough and strong enough to push that rock down the hillside it will be time for you to go and join your father.'

So every day the boy would try to push that rock down the hillside, but, of course, it

never moved, and yet all the time he was growing stronger and stronger the more he kept on pushing, until one day he gave it an extra strong push, and he saw the rock beginning to move just ever so little. Then he gave another strong push, and he saw the rock go toppling over and crashing down the hillside. Then what a surprise he got! In the place where the rock had been he found a casket, and in the casket a magic sword, and a pair of magic shoes. When he tried on the shoes he found that they just fitted him, and when he took the sword in his hand it seemed as though it was made for him. He was nearly a man by this time, big enough and strong enough to do a man's work, so away he went to Athens to join his father, wearing the magic shoes on his feet, and holding the magic sword in his hand.

So while you are boys and girls God is preparing you for the time when He will call you to do a man's work or a woman's work in the world; but that time is not yet; it will come soon enough. The great question is, Will you be ready for that time when it comes? That all depends on what you do with your time now. If you play well you will grow

strong in body. If you make the most of your school hours you will grow strong in mind. If every day you try to be as brave and gentle and true and upright as you can, you will grow strong in soul, and so when God calls you to do a man's or a woman's work in the world you will be ready. Don't be in too much of a hurry to grow up. Make the most of all this time when God is preparing you for the bigger part you are to take later on.

XI

FINDING THE WAY

'WHICH is the way to such and such a place?' I asked of a policeman in Dublin. He pointed out two different roads which I could take. 'You kin go this way or you kin go that way,' said he, 'but you kin please yourself which way you take.'

I thanked him and passed on.

A few days later I was walking along a road down in the south of Ireland, when I met an old countryman.

'How many miles is it to such and such a place?' I asked him

'Well, sorr,' said he 'Oi always says it's three moile, but the most of 'em says it's foive moile—so foive moile it is.'

Sometimes we speak of life as though it was a journey, and so it is. We are all travellers in a great new country where we've never been before. Every day we live we travel

over a fresh bit of country. There are many different roads we can take, and it's very easy to lose our way. There's the right road and there's the wrong road. There's a good road, and a road that's not quite so good, and there's a bad road ; and every day we travel, God lets us choose for ourselves which road we take. If God didn't let us do that we should never learn how to choose aright, and so we should never grow up into men and women.

Sometimes we know the right way very well, but we are a little afraid to take it because we see a lot of other people travelling on different roads, and the right way seems rather lonely. So we are like the old Irishman. We have our own opinion, but we think because most of the people say something else they must be right, although we feel in our hearts that they're wrong. ' I always think that this is the right way,' we say, ' but most other people think something else, so they must be right.'

Because God knew how very easy it was for any of us to lose our way on this journey of ours, He sent Jesus to show us the way. And Jesus once called Himself ' The Way,' and if we follow Him, He said, we can never lose our way.

XII

SOMETHING WELL WORTH KNOWING

You have all heard that during the last few years a lot of dreadful things have been happening in Ireland. There are very few people in the world who really understand what it's all about, though there are a lot of people who think they do. But, anyhow, we all know that for some time past things have been settling down there, and they have stopped killing one another and burning down beautiful buildings. They have got what very many people in Ireland wanted—a government of their own, just like Canada and Australia and South Africa and New Zealand. But are they happy now they've got what they wanted ?

That was the thing I tried to find out above everything else when I was in Ireland a little while ago. So I took the train out somewhere near to the Lakes of Killarney. Then I got

on the road and began to walk through the country, dressed in an old suit of clothes, and with a boy-scout bag slung over my shoulder to carry my food and a few odd things. As I walked, I stopped to have a chat with almost everybody I met on the road. Now and again I got a lift in a donkey-cart or a lorry or a motor-car. In this way I met all sorts of people, rich and poor ; but wherever I went I asked the people one question : 'What do you think of it all now?' Of course, I got a good many different answers to that question, but there was one answer that I got again and again. It was this ; 'We didn't know when we were well off.'

It is a fine thing for people to know when they are well off. But how many people do ? How many of us know how well off we are ? Sometimes bad moods come stealing over us, and we think we are the worst-off people in the whole world, and we begin to get sorry for ourselves.

Now I want to tell you that you are all very rich people, and you don't know how well off you are.

Let us see.

All of you have health. But there are

many people who belong to this church who cannot possibly come because they are far too ill to leave their beds. You are much better off than they are.

All of you had a good breakfast before you came to church. But there were over two hundred poor men and women in this city who had no homes, and no money to buy breakfast, and so they had to go and ask for a breakfast at the Free Breakfast Mission. You are much better off than they are.

Most of you, if not all, have a good father and mother. But there are hundreds of boys and girls in Edinburgh whose fathers and mothers don't take care of them at all well, and sometimes they go away and forget all about them, and at other times they are cruel to them. You are much better off than they are.

You are living in this year. You can come to church and worship God without any fear that somebody will be waiting outside to take you off to prison or burn you at the stake. But it is not so very many years ago that people in Scotland couldn't do that. If they wanted to worship God they had to run away and hide in caves and rocks, and worship God

there. You are much better off now than you would have been if you had been living in those days.

You have all heard of the love of God in Jesus Christ. But there are thousands of boys and girls in many parts of the world who have never yet heard about that ; and that is the greatest thing in the world. You are much better off than they are.

Well then, aren't you very rich after all ? Aren't you very well off ? And you didn't know it ! I hope you do now.

Boys and girls, go about this world thankful that you're alive, and making other people thankful for it too. Know how well off you are, and try always to make other people better off too.

XIII

A NEW SUIT OF CLOTHES

Last summer I badly wanted a new suit of clothes, so every time I passed a tailor's shop I looked in the window. One day I looked into the window of a very fashionable shop in the West End of London, a shop where all the best-dressed people of London go to get their clothes; but the prices were so much higher than anything I could afford to pay that I was afraid to go in, and didn't get any further than *looking* in. But as I looked I saw what was to me a strange thing. There was a notice which read:

Riding-Breeches
and
Habit-Makers.

Now I knew what riding-breeches were, and I could understand what a maker of riding-breeches was, . . . but what was a 'habit-maker'? Suddenly I thought of the

French which I used to learn at school, and one of the lessons in which we were taught to say ' mes habits ' for ' my clothes.' Then I knew that these big tailors were just using the old French word, and that when they called themselves ' habit-makers,' they just meant that they were makers of clothes.

But that is what we all are, especially when we are very young—habit-makers. Every day that we live we are making our habits, and one of the strange things about these habits of ours is that they become a part of us, just as a suit of clothes becomes a part of us. Sometimes when a man goes to the tailor's for a fit-on, if he is not very pleased with the suit the tailor will say, ' Oh, that will grow to you after you have worn it a little while '—and so it does. It grows to him until it comes to fit him as though it was a part of him. So it is with these habits of ours that we make. They don't fit us very well at first, but after a little they grow to us—little habits of laziness, or of lying, or of cowardice, or of bad temper ; or little habits of industry or truth-speaking, or bravery or goodwill—these little things grow to us until they become quite a part of ourselves and we can't get away from them.

We make these habits when we are very young, and when we are older the habits make us. Yes, we are all habit-makers. How important it is that we should get the right habits while we are young!

Of all the people who ever wrote about Jesus Christ, there was none greater than the Apostle Paul. To him, Jesus was so wonderful that he could never find words to describe all he wanted to say about Him. Sometimes he spoke of Jesus as his Captain, leading him in the battle of life. Sometimes he spoke of Jesus as his Saviour, keeping him from sin. Sometimes he spoke of Jesus as his Elder Brother. . . . Once he actually spoke of Jesus as though He were a suit of clothes or robes, and he said: '*Put ye on* the Lord Jesus Christ.' The boy or girl who 'puts on' the Lord Jesus Christ, living every day in His spirit, will find some day that the Lord Jesus Christ has become, as it were, a part of him, or of her, and people will know all the difference in them, because 'they have been with Jesus.'

XIV

THE THRASHING

FAR away in the Australian bush a little boy was getting a good thrashing—that is to say, a long thrashing. It needn't have been nearly so long if the little boy had had more sense. Even to talk about it gives me a hot and cold feeling all down my back, like you get before you go to bed with influenza.

This little boy had been told by his mother to do a certain thing ; but he had simply said, ' No, I won't.' So his mother took out a little stick to teach him better. There's no need to tell you what the stick was like—you've seen exactly the same kind of stick in Scotland. There's no need to tell you how it is used either, for it's done much the same way all the world over.

First the mother gave the boy a few gentle taps with the stick. Then she stopped, and said, ' Will you do it now ? ' ' No,' came the

answer. Then the mother gave the boy a few more taps, this time a little harder. Once again she stopped, and said, 'Will you do it now?' Again came the same answer from the little boy, 'No, I won't.' Then the mother took up the stick and began to use it in real earnest. 'Whack, whack, whack,' she went, and then 'whack, whack, whack,' again. The little fellow did his very best not to cry, but he could not keep the tears back, and in a few moments they were trickling down his cheeks. Again the mother stopped, 'Will you do it now?' she asked once again. There was a pause, while the little chap thought what he would say. At last there came through his tears the answer which he ought to have given long before. 'Ye-e-s,' said he. And so the thrashing came to an end.

As I watched it all I could not help thinking of days long ago when I used to get thrashings, but when I got a thrashing it was given me by father, which was much worse. Then there came into my mind some of the things my father used to say about thrashings, and especially two things—one which he often said before a thrashing, and one which he often said after.

First, before a thrashing. 'Now, my boy, this is going to do you a lot of good, because it's going to hurt you,' father would say. He always seemed to think that the more a thing hurt the more good it was likely to do you. Perhaps he was right, but I could never quite understand it. I'm not even sure I understand it yet; but perhaps I understand it a little better.

None of us can live for long without getting some thrashings. Some of them, it may be, we get from our parents, or from our schoolmasters, and we feel them in our bodies. Others we get from life itself, and we feel them in our souls. Sometimes life thrashes us all. It brings us all kinds of pains and hurts, and sometimes they come when we think we don't deserve them, and we try all we can to get away from these thrashings that life gives us. And yet it is quite true that often these things that pain and hurt us, the things we try to run away from, are the very things that do us a lot of good.

Think of that little girl with the bad toothache. She's been awake all night with it, and now the morning has come she's nearly mad with the pain. Her mother thinks she

had better go to the dentist to have the tooth out ; but she would much rather have the toothache than do that. She wants to run away from that because she knows it will hurt. But at last she plucks up enough courage to go. She is very timid, but the dentist is a nice man who soon makes her feel at home. She sits down in a beautiful red chair all done up in velvet. She presses her foot firmly on the foot-rest, and grips the arms of the chair tight. She has made up her mind to go through with it.

' Just a moment,' says the dentist, ' it will soon be over.'

' Ah—ah—aaa—aahh.'

An awful wrench, for a moment—and then the tooth is out, and now that the tooth is gone the toothache will be gone too.

It was one of life's thrashings, and it hurt her a lot, but it did her quite a lot of good.

Think of that little boy who can't for the life of him work sums. He hates them. Whenever he sees a sum coming round the corner he wants to run for his life.

Now suppose that instead of running away from the sums that hurt him he faces up to them and makes up his mind that he's going

to master them. Why, the very thing he hates because it hurts him is the thing that does him most good ; for when he talks like that to his sums he will not only learn to master his sums—he will learn something much bigger and better—he will learn to master himself—and no boy or man is of much use till he has learned to master himself.

Well, that's the first lesson we can learn from the thrashing—that sometimes the things we dislike most of all because they give us trouble and pain and hurt, are the things that do us most good. Every day we all have to face something that hurts us a little, something we would rather run away from. Some days we have to face things that hurt us a lot. But we shan't try to run away from them any more just because they hurt, shall we ? We shall face up to them bravely, and see if they won't do us good.

We'll talk about the second thing we can learn from the thrashing some other day.

XV

AFTER THE THRASHING

'It hurt me far more than it hurt you.' That was the second thing my father used to say about thrashings. Sometimes he would say it a week after a thrashing, when I had forgotten all about it, and was just about ready for another one. 'It hurt me far more than it hurt you.'

I believed everything my father told me—except that. How could it possibly hurt him more than it hurt me?

Well, of course, it hurt him in a different place, to begin with. It hurt him deep down in his heart. It hurt him just because he was my father, and he loved me. Because he loved me it gave pain to him to find that I should be doing anything that wasn't quite right. If he hadn't loved me it wouldn't have hurt him at all. But because he loved me he could not help feeling pain when I did

wrong. Yes, it certainly hurt him more than it hurt me.

You and I have been taught to think of God as our Father—a Father who is wiser, truer, stronger, more tender than the best of earthly fathers. Jesus taught us that He who rules over all the world is none other than our Father. He taught us that we are God's children, and that when we look up to Him and call Him our Father we are calling Him by the best name we could possibly find for Him. And when this great Father of ours sees us hurting ourselves by our wrong-doing—getting our thrashings—He is pained just because He is our Father, and we are His children, and He loves us. It hurts Him even more than it hurts us.

Let us remember that the next time we are tempted to do wrong—we are not only breaking the law of God, we may be breaking the Father's heart. We shall hurt ourselves much, but we shall hurt Him more. If we really love our Father we shall find it so much harder to do wrong, and so much easier to do right.

XVI

MESSAGES UNDER THE SEA

(Empire Day)

The world is made up of ever so many big families. There are some families of white people, and some of black people ; some of red people, some of yellow, and some of brown. There is the French family, and the German family, and the Russian family, and the Chinese family, and the Japanese family, and ever so many more. But the largest family of all is the British family. There are about eighteen hundred millions of people in the world, and at least four hundred and fifty millions of them belong to the British family, or theBritish Empire, as we generally call it. The members of that family are of many different colours, they speak many different languages, and they have many different religions ; but they are one great family called the British Empire.

This family was not always so large a family. A few years ago it was quite a small family—just the people of England and Scotland and Ireland and Wales. Then the family grew and grew until at last Britain became like the old woman who lived in a shoe, 'she had so many children, she didn't know what to do.' The children found that there wasn't enough room for them in the old home, so that little by little they began to leave it. Some went to America, some to Canada, some to India, some to South Africa, some to Australia, some to New Zealand, some to the islands of the seas; but wherever they went they took with them their love of the old home, and soon they set up homes of their own far away from the Motherland; and the Motherland was pleased to have them go away and do that, so long as they didn't forget all about her.

Well, this is the great family Day of Remembrance, May 24, Empire Day. Because of that, the cables all over the world are extra busy to-day, flashing messages under the sea. What a time the fishes must be having! But what are these special messages all about? If you were to see them all, you would find that they are very different

messages, but though the messages are in different words they all mean much the same thing. They are messages of love to the Motherland—from the people of Australia, and New Zealand, and Canada, and South Africa, and from every farthest island in the sea, there will be cabled the message : ' Dear old Motherland, we love you and are loyal to you, and always will be loyal to you.' And the King will send back the message from the Motherland to all the far-away countries of the Empire : ' My dear sons and daughters, though you are far away from home, the Motherland never forgets you, and I hope you will never forget her.'

Those are the messages that are being sent under the sea to-day. What a proud thing it is to be a Briton ! What a wonderful family it is ! What an honour to belong to the greatest empire the world has ever seen !

But there are people who tell us that this great empire of ours won't last much longer. They say that there were other great empires in olden times—Greece and Rome and Assyria—and as they all passed away one by one, so ours will go too.

There is one thing, and only one, that will

keep our Empire. It won't be the number of soldiers we have in our army, or the number of sailors we have in our navy. It will all depend on how many good men and women we have all over the Empire, in every country under the British flag. If we are true to Christ's flag, we need have no fear for the Union Jack. Will you try to be one of the good men or one of the good women that help to keep the Empire together? Of course you will; but you must begin by being good, honest, upright, and true as boys and girls—that is to say, you must be enlisted under the banner of King Jesus, to serve Him all your days.

XVII

ON THE EXPLORERS' ROAD

Away to the west of the city of Sydney, Australia, there is a range of high mountains which divides one half of the State of New South Wales from the other. Up to about sixty years ago no one had ever been across those mountains to find out what lay on the other side ; but one day a party of explorers set out from Sydney determined to find a way across those mountains somehow. For the first fifty miles or so the going was easy enough, for there was some sort of a road all the way. Then they came up to this mountain range and found it covered with dense forest, so that their real task began. They pushed ahead through the forest, blazing a track as they went, until at last they found they could get no further, so they marked the spot and made their way back to Sydney, where they reported what they had done,

Later on other explorers came along and got further still, until at last they managed to get right across the mountains, to find that on the other side of the range the most beautiful plain-country stretched out ahead of them for hundreds of miles. To-day there is a well-made road that stretches right across those mountains and far beyond it, and every year thousands of people travel across where sixty years ago there was no road at all.

Once I was taking a walking-tour in that region, and for some miles I travelled on that road. It was a holiday time, and on one particular day the traffic was about ten times as much as usual, so much so that walkers had rather a bad time of it. As I walked along I was always having to get out of the way of the traffic. First there would be the sudden honk of a motor-car, and I would have to jump for my life. Then when I had gone into the middle of the road again I would hear the rattle of some heavy lorry which was gradually catching up with me. Rich people in beautiful cars rushed past, taking no notice of a poor fellow like me. Char-a-bancs with happy people out for a holiday overtook me. Now and again some of the people in them

would give me a cheer. Once a young man threw an orange at me as he passed ; as luck would have it, he was a bad shot. Once a young woman pulled a face at me. Several times people laughed aloud as much as to say, ' Poor fellow, struggling along there on a hot day while we're riding.' And so the stream of traffic went by all day long. Then for a little while there was a lull in the traffic. The road became so quiet that I thought I had it all to myself ; but the stillness did not last long, for it was soon broken by the sound of a quick-trotting horse in the distance. Nearer and nearer it came, till at last it got near enough for me to see that it was pulling a butcher's cart. As the butcher overtook me, he pulled up the horse. Then with a pleasant smile and a ' good-afternoon,' he said : ' Can I give you a lift, sir ? ' That was all—but it was a great deal. It so happened that I didn't want a lift, for I was out for a walk ; but from that time onward I found the walking a little easier than before.

Now all that is very much like life itself. We are all on a long, long journey, and sometimes the going is very hard and tiring to the feet. Lots of people pass us on the way.

Some are so rich or so clever or so important that they take no notice of us ordinary folk at all. Some are happy souls who give us a cheer and a kindly word as they pass ; for a moment it makes the journey much pleasanter, but they are soon gone and we never see them again. Some think themselves so smart that they just make fun of us. Some are so rude and ill-mannered that they cannot help making us feel a bit uncomfortable. But every now and again someone passes, and says : 'Can I give you a lift ?' Of course, they don't say it in just those words, but it means the same thing. They are always looking for a chance to help others. It may be that we don't need the lift or the help just then, but when people like that pass our way it makes all the difference, and the going is always a little easier for us afterwards.

Every day that we travel along life's roadway we are passing people who need a lift. It may be that it is only a kindly word they need, it may be a kindly deed—but they need a lift. Let us remember to ask that question as we pass them. 'Can I give you a lift ?'—either with our lips, or with our lives.

XVIII

DAYLIGHT SAVING

It was about ten o'clock on Saturday evening of April 17, 1926. The boys and girls in London were sound asleep in their beds—or if they weren't they ought to have been ; and the grown-up folks were beginning to get ready for bed. Fathers and mothers were creeping quietly about the house putting on the clocks one hour, for on the next day 'Summer time' started. And as they moved about the house putting on the clocks they said all kinds of different things. One man said, 'It's an awful nuisance losing a whole hour's sleep ; of course, I shan't be able to go to church to-morrow morning.' Another said, 'What a joke it would be if the minister forgot to put his clock on and didn't get to church till twelve!' And another said, 'I'm very glad we're putting the clock forward an hour, because I haven't been out all the week

and I shall get to church an hour sooner.' Then there were all kinds of people who thought, not so much about going to church, but about the extra hour of daylight they would have all through the summer. Tired shop-girls thought of all the tennis they would be able to get in the evenings. Weary mothers thought of the walks they would be able to have with father. Overworked business men thought of all the games of golf they would be able to play. And so they went on thinking and talking.

But strange to say, no one said a word about William Willett. In fact, if anybody had said anything about him people would have asked, 'What about William Willett, anyway? Who is he?'

Perhaps you have never heard of him. Perhaps most of the grown-up folks have forgotten about him. But William Willett was the man who gave us the extra hour of daylight. He was a builder in London. One day he got an idea that if we all agreed to put on the clocks for an hour in the summer-time we should get an extra hour of daylight every day. The more he thought about it, the more he liked the idea. He began to talk about it

to his friends, but they only laughed at him. Then he wrote letters to the papers about it, and people wrote back to say it was a very foolish idea. Then he held meetings and gave addresses about it; and still people laughed. But he still thought his idea a good one, and he didn't care how much people laughed at him. Then he began to worry the Government about it, and the Government laughed too. At last William Willett died, and people were still laughing at him up to the end. But they don't laugh at him any longer, for to-day a good part of the world puts the clock forward an hour in the spring, and has an extra hour of daylight—all because of William Willett. We take what he gave us, and we forget all about him.

I'm afraid we often treat men like that; but it is much worse when we treat God like that. It is so easy to take all He gives us, and to forget Him. 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and *forget* not all His benefits.'

XIX

A CHILDREN'S SERVICE

(Part 1)

Boys and girls, this is to be a little service for you alone. There are some grown-up folks here as well, and we are glad to see them; but we are just going on with the service as though they were not here at all.

First of all, let me say how glad I am that you are all here in good time, as I asked you to be. At day school you have to be there in good time, whether you like it or not; but at Sunday school and at church you can please yourself whether you come early or late; but you are all the more on your honour to come in time, for it is God's house, and out of loyalty to your school you ought to be there in time. A little while ago the Prince of Wales came to Edinburgh, and thousands of people went out to see him; but I noticed that if he was to be at a certain place at eleven

o'clock the people didn't get to that place about five minutes past eleven; they were there much nearer to ten, and they wouldn't have missed being there in time, for anything.

Some people come to church late because they can't help it. They have so much work to do before they come, getting the children ready, washing up after breakfast, and ever so many other things, that it is very hard work for them to get there at all. But there are some who always come to church late just because they don't really take any trouble to be there in time. They think it doesn't matter, and so they come in at any odd time, and they sometimes make a big noise when they come, and disturb every one else—all just because they don't think. If they were going to Buckingham Palace to see the King they would be ready ever so long before the time; but they forget that when they come to church it is as though they were going to God's house to bow before the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Always be in church in good time unless you have a good reason for being late. You owe it to God. You owe it to the other people in church not to come in late and

disturb them. It is reverence. It is good manners.

And that reminds me of something else. I am very glad to see you all looking so bright and clean and well-dressed. Even when we haven't any specially nice clothes to wear we can always come with our faces clean, and our hair done nicely, and our boots polished. We ought always to come to the House of God looking our very best; it is a mark of respect for Him.

The other day I was talking to a lady who had come all the way from Australia to be presented to the King at Buckingham Palace. She had to buy a very special Court dress, which cost no end of money; and then for days before she had to practise the proper kind of bowing so that she should do it right when she went before the King; then she had to learn how to bow as she went out backwards. At last the day came, and she went to Buckingham Palace. She got on all right until the time came to leave the Royal presence and go out backwards, bowing as she went. She became so nervous and excited just then that she tripped on the floor, and wished that the floor would have opened and

swallowed her up ; but still, she thought that all the trouble and expense were worth it, to go into the King's presence. Nothing was too much trouble so that she might look her best and act her best there.

Now there are two kinds of dressing to come to the House of God, our King. First we dress the body, by which we make ourselves look as nice as we possibly can. We must not forget that. Then we ought to dress the soul. Nobody sees how our soul is dressed ; but it is properly dressed for God's House when we come there in a good spirit, gladly and cheerfully, reverently and humbly, and with kindly feelings in our hearts towards everybody. So whenever we come to church we must remember to leave behind all grudges or ill-will against other people, and we must come with respect and reverence, for it is the House of God, and we are coming to worship the King of Kings. Then as soon as we come into the church, we bow our heads and offer up a little prayer in silence. Suppose, just for this once, we say such a little prayer all together. (You repeat each sentence after me, and the teachers will help you).

'O God, our great King, we are Thy

servants. O God, our Father, we are Thy children. Help us to serve Thee, and help us to love Thee. And help us also to love and serve all our fellows, for the sake of Jesus our Lord, who went about doing good. Amen.'

Now we'll sing a bright, glad hymn :

> Awake my soul, and with the sun
> Thy daily stage of duty run.

Stand up straight, open your lungs, open your mouths, and sing it.

XX

A CHILDREN'S SERVICE

(Part II)

Now we are going to join together in prayer.

But what is prayer? What do we do when we pray? When we pray, we just talk with God. But remember, God is our Father. That's the name we give to Him when we begin the Lord's Prayer—'Our Father.' So whenever you pray, remember that it is as though you were talking to your Father in heaven; there is nothing you cannot ask Him or tell Him about, just because He is your Father. You can thank Him for all His goodness. You can take to Him all your little troubles. You can tell Him all about your bad temper and your selfishness, and how much you want His help and His strength to overcome them. Tell Him everything.

But perhaps you say, 'what's the use of

that, if we never see Him or hear Him speak ? ' We all know that no one has ever seen God, and no one has ever felt His touch as we can feel the touch of our earthly fathers, or our brothers and sisters. And yet sometimes you hear people praying that they may ' see God,' or that they ' may feel God's presence.' What do they mean ? Well, it is a very hard thing to explain ; but I will try to help you understand it a bit better.

Suppose there is a boy called Johnny Smith, and someone who has never seen him asks me to tell him what Johnny Smith is like. I might begin by saying that Johnny has big feet, or blue eyes, or a turn-up nose, or red hair, and I might go on to tell him everything I can remember about Johnny Smith. But when I have finished telling him everything I can remember, I have not really told him what Johnny Smith is like. I have told him only what Johnny Smith looks like on the *outside*. I have never seen the real Johnny Smith, because Johnny Smith lives *inside*— we only see the house in which the real Johnny Smith lives. We don't see the real Johnny Smith ; inside of what we *call* Johnny Smith is the real Johnny Smith, or the *spirit*

of Johnny. When Johnny's big feet and turn-up nose and all the rest have fallen to pieces and decayed, the real Johnny Smith still lives on; the spirit of Johnny Smith never dies.

Now all that will help us to understand a bit better what we mean when we say that God is a Spirit, though we can never fully understand it. Every one of us is a spirit, but a spirit clothed with flesh and blood. The flesh and blood are only a covering, a kind of house, in which we live; but the real 'us' is something that nobody can see. God does not live in a house of flesh and blood, as we do. He is everywhere and over all. He is the perfect Spirit, and our spirits are at the very best imperfect; but we are on the way to perfection.

Now let us get back to our little friend, Johnny Smith. Can Johnny Smith 'feel the presence of God'? Yes, I will tell you how. Sometimes Johnny wakes up in the morning and 'gets out of bed the wrong side,' as we say. He begins the day feeling very cross and bad-tempered, and it is not long before he is making everybody feel very unhappy. Then Johnny kneels down and lifts his heart

to God. He tells his Father that he really doesn't want to be like that at all ; he wants to be nice and agreeable and helpful. When he gets up from his prayers he feels better already. He even wants to help somebody. What has happened ? We can only say that Johnny Smith has felt the presence of God. The good Spirit of God has touched Johnny's poor spirit, and changed it ; it has driven out the evil spirit of bad temper, and everything is different. He has felt God's presence. So it is with all our bad moods. Whenever they are driven out of us, and better moods take their place, God has been touching us, even though we didn't know it.

Now let us close our eyes and bow our heads in prayer.

(I want you all to join in the prayer with me, repeating each little sentence after me. The teachers will help you as they did before.)

> ' Our loving Father, we bless Thee for all Thy goodness unto us. We thank Thee for health and strength, for home and friends, for food and clothing. We thank Thee for Jesus, who taught us how we ought to live. But we own to Thee how ungrateful we have been ; how

we have forgotten Thy goodness, and how little we have lived as Jesus taught us to live. Forgive us for all our want of love, our meanness and unkindness, our bad temper and our selfishness, and everything else that has grieved Thee. We want to do better every day, and in Thy strength we *can* do better. Help us to help others, wherever we are, by our thoughts and deeds of love ; and may we so live that we shall never bring pain, but always gladness, to the hearts of those who love us, and most of all to Thee who hast loved us with an everlasting love. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.'

HYMN

XXI

A CHILDREN'S SERVICE

(Part III)

Now we are going to read a short piece from the Bible.

'Bible' is just an old word which means 'Book.' But the Bible is not only *a* book. It is *the* book, the greatest book the world has ever seen, and it contains the greatest stories the world has ever heard. There is one great story running right through the book, though it is told in ever so many different ways. It is the story of the love of God.

The Bible tells us how in the early days of the world's history men thought that God was an angry being, and how they tried to soften His anger by offering up all kinds of sacrifices, and how God taught them little by little that the kind of sacrifice that pleased Him most was a life given up to His service, and lived in truth and uprightness. Then it tells of the

great moment when at last Jesus came and showed men by His beautiful life and glorious death what God was like, so that ever afterwards when men wondered what God was like they had only to look at Jesus as He lived and walked among men, and they would see God, and know what kind of a life God asked of men.

When you first went to school you had to begin with the A B C, because that was all your little brain could take in. Then as you got a little older you learned little words like C-A-T, Cat, and D-O-G, Dog. Then as you got a little older still you learned bigger words still, and little sentences; then bigger sentences, until at last you were able to read books. People always have to be taught that way. So it was when the world was very young. The most important thing that men could come to know was what God was like. But they had to be taught little by little, much as you learned the A B C. Then, when they were able to take in a little more, God taught them bigger things about Himself, and at last, when they were ready for it, God sent Jesus Christ to teach them the biggest thing of all about Himself—that God is love.

That is the greatest thing any one of us can learn about God—that God is love, and that wherever love is, God is. The more that you and I live in the spirit of love, the more do we become like God.

Now we'll read the lesson. (Story of the call of Samuel.)

HYMN

PRAYER

XXII

A CHILDREN'S SERVICE

(Part IV)

Now we come to the offering, or the collection. In some places they call it ' The Offering,' and in others they call it ' The Collection.' Both are really the same thing, but I think ' offering ' is a much better word. If you were to ask me why I think that, I should be tempted to tell you this story. There was once a little girl who had a favourite dog named Cæsar. She loved Cæsar so much that she thought nothing was too good for him. She always used to save up some of the best pieces of meat at dinner to give to Cæsar. One day, when her mother had some friends to dinner, she was picking out some nice pieces for Cæsar, when her mother said, ' Never mind Cæsar now, I'll find something for him afterwards.' Then after dinner her mother collected a few scraps, one or two bones, and a

little gravy, scraped them all into a dish and gave it to the little girl for Cæsar. The little girl was very sad at this. She thought it wasn't nearly good enough. By and by she took the dish into the kitchen, where Cæsar was waiting for her, and as she put the dish down on the floor she said sadly, 'Here you are, Cæsar, I was going to give you an offering, but mother has sent you a collection.'

Well, in this church we always have offerings, and not collections. We may not be able to give very much, but we can give our best, and we can give it cheerfully, with our heart's love in it. Then it becomes an offering, even if it is *called* a collection.

Boys and girls will now take up the offering.

Hymn

Now we come to the very last thing—'The Benediction.' That is just a big word which means 'The blessing.' But although the blessing comes last in the service, it is really the beginning of the service, and not the end at all. We have been in the church for just over an hour. In one way the service is just about to close. In another way it is just about to begin. We came here that we might learn

how to go out and live a little better somewhere else—in our homes, at our school, at our work, wherever we are. That is where the service really begins. So that the benediction, though it comes last, is really the first thing.

I have read of a little boy who went to a children's service at which the minister talked about the words of Jesus, 'Let your light shine.' He told the children that they were letting their light shine when they were truthful and good-tempered and unselfish and brave. Now this little boy had a rather nasty temper that was always getting the better of him; but during that service he made up his mind that he was going to be better-tempered, he was going to let his light shine. All that afternoon he kept good-tempered and let his light shine; but when it was time for tea and the tea was a bit late, and he was hungry, he lost his temper once again. 'Now, Johnny,' said his mother, 'that isn't letting your light shine when you get cross like that.' 'Oh, no,' said Johnny, 'but I'm afraid I've blown myself out.'

Now we are all going from this place to let our light shine. Let us be very sure to keep

it burning brightly, and whatever happens, don't let it get blown out!

ALL STANDING

May the grace (the gentleness, the kindness, the patience, the loveableness) of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship (the nearness, the companionship, the friendship) of the Holy Spirit, rest upon us now, and abide with us always. Amen.

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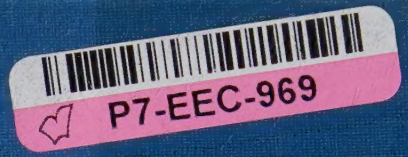
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